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Air Quality

NEWSLETTER

MIAMI DADE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Air Quality

NEWSLETTER



AIR QUALITY AND THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

EXTRA, EXTRA..... NEW AIR QUALITY STANDARDS!!!



The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has determined if air quality areas were designated today, the entire State of Florida would be in attainment for both the existing 1-hour and proposed 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The USEPA is currently transitioning to the new 8-hour ozone and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) national ambient air quality standards to amend the transportation conformity rule. The proposed rule was released in November and the final implementation plan will be in place after January 2004. Attainment and nonattainment areas for ozone and particulate matter will be designated by the EPA in April 2004 and December 2004, respectively.

Miami-Dade County, a maintenance area for air quality, would still be subject to conformity for a statutory one-year grace period after designation by the new standards. Conformity will not be required for either the 1-hour nonattainment or 1-hour maintenance areas after the one-year grace period when the standard is revoked.

The goal of the new standard is to better account for the effects on public health in an effort to reduce the amount of time people spend breathing elevated levels of air pollutants. The new standard is based on averaging air quality measurements over 8-hour blocks of time (any 8-hour block) for a three year period, instead of the 1-hour blocks of time mandated by the current standard. By focusing on the actual monitored concentrations instead of focusing attention on the number of days that the standard is exceeded (regardless of the level that the standard is exceeded) will provide better information of the effects on public health.

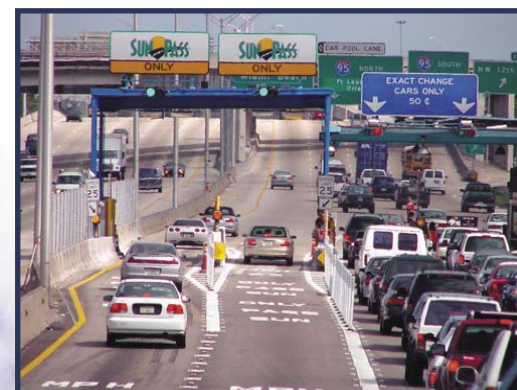
The 8-hour standard is more representative of conditions occurring over a long-term exposure. For Miami-Dade County this is extremely critical as the local tourist industry relies upon the attractiveness of outdoor activities.

Ozone is a colorless and highly irritating gas formed by a chemical reaction between air pollutants that are often found over urban areas on hot summer days in the presence of sunlight. Two common air pollutants, nitrogen oxide (NO₂) and volatile organic compounds (VOC) react with each other to produce ground-level ozone.

Air Quality in Miami-Dade County

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), in 1990, adopted specific amendments to the Clean Air Act that allowed the USEPA to classify areas according to the severity of the pollution problem. In 1991, Miami-Dade County was classified to be a Moderate Non-Attainment Area according to national standards for ozone.

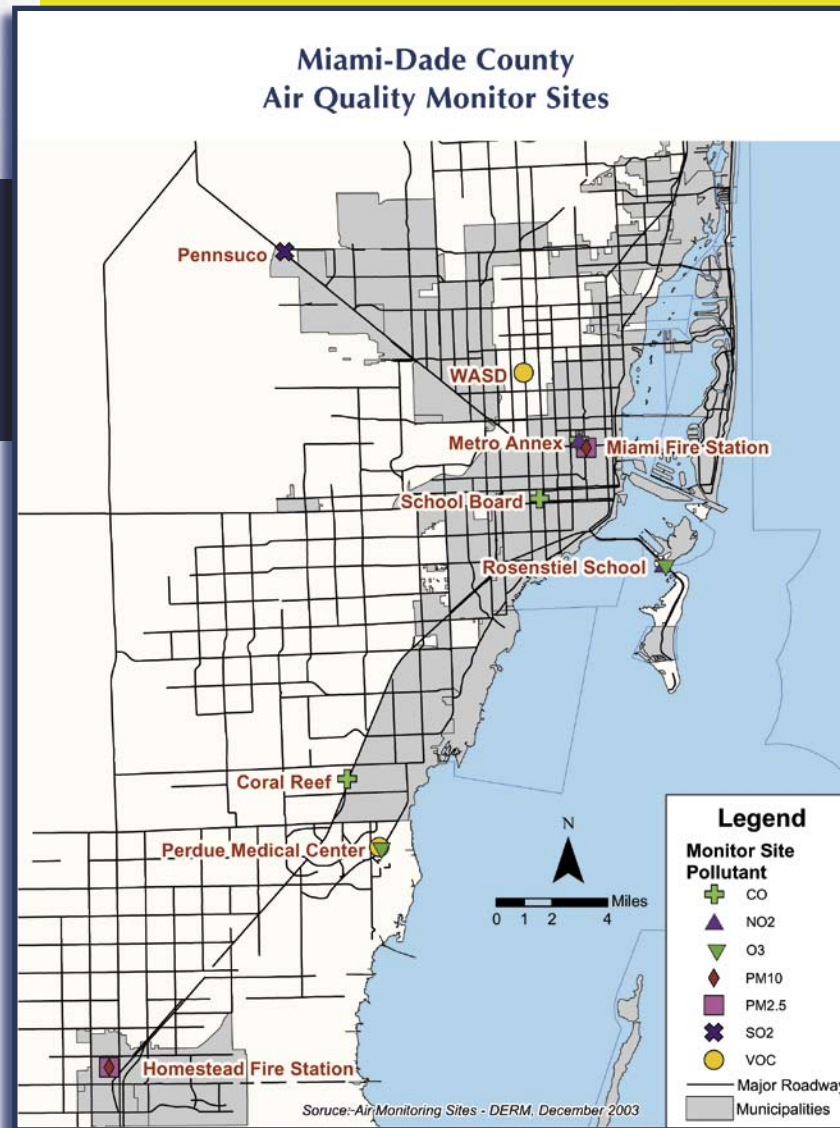
By 1995, emission levels had been reduced which allowed Miami-Dade County to be redesignated as a Maintenance Area for air quality. This redesignation requires Miami-Dade County to show conformance to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) through its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). An area that is designated (or redesignated) as a Maintenance Area must then monitor emissions for a twenty-year period to show conformance to the NAAQS.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Come to the MPO's Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) meetings. Sign up to serve on the CTAC board. For more information, call the MPO at (305) 375-4507 and ask for Elizabeth Rockwell.
- Ride Metrobus, Metrorail, or TriRail; for more information on how to use these systems call the Miami-Dade Transit Authority's Customer Service Line at (305) 770-3131.
- Carpool or utilize flex time/hours at your work, for more information on carpooling contact the South Florida Services' Customer Service Line at 1-800-234-RIDE.
- Walk or bike for short trips.
- Encourage others to consider their impacts on our air quality.
- Keep track of the South East Air Coalition for Outreach Alliance whose mission is to promote air quality programs and awareness. This alliance includes public and private organizations.

The conformity proposal, for the new 8-hour ozone and PM2.5 air quality standards, from USEPA is available for public inspection and comment at the following Internet site:
<http://www.epa.gov/otaq/transp/conform/con-regs.htm>



Air Monitoring Sites

Air monitoring sites were set up to ensure compliance with the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments within the Southeast Florida Airshed. The validated air monitoring data demonstrated conformance with the NAAQS and enabled the Southeast Florida Airshed to be redesignated to maintenance status in 1995.

There are currently eight (8) ambient air monitoring stations located throughout Miami-Dade County. The criteria pollutants, as defined by the Clean Air Act as ozone (O₃), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulates (PM10 and PM2.5), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂), are monitored to protect the public welfare and public health of the people of Miami-Dade County. The map below shows the location of each air monitoring station and identifies the pollutant monitored.

The Southeast Florida Airshed

The Southeast Florida Airshed is made up of the tri-county area comprised of Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties. An airshed is a geographic area where air quality is influenced by similar sources, meteorology and terrain conditions.

Growing Together

Based on the 2000 Census, parts of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties were designated as a single urbanized area. Due to the size and complexity of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning areas located in this urbanized area, three separate MPOs will be maintained with a stronger regional coordinated planning process emphasizing a coordinated project prioritization and selection process, regional public involvement, and coordinated air quality planning.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program

The CMAQ program provides funds for surface transportation and other related projects that improve air quality and reduce congestion. Historically, the CMAQ funding for Miami-Dade has been utilized to provide programs that include bike/pedestrian programs, ride-sharing, ITS projects, and expansion of the transit system. When Miami-Dade County is designated as an attainment area under the new 8-hour NAAQS it still unclear what will happen to these funds.

Southeast District of the Department of Environmental Protection

The Southeast District of the Department of Environmental Protection has formed a Southeast Air Coalition for Outreach (SEACO), which consists of partnerships of public and private organizations. SEACO was tasked to improve air quality within Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties. Their mission is "to promote air quality programs and awareness by forming a multi agency and cross media council."

SEACO will assist other outreach programs through public awareness programs and education. Their focus is to reach more people through coordinated efforts of the three counties and their pooled resources.



DID YOU KNOW?

Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) are "Organic chemicals that contain the element carbon; VOCs include gasoline, industrial chemicals such as benzene, solvents such as toluene and xylene, and tetrachloroethylene. Many volatile organic chemicals are also hazardous air pollutants; for example, benzene causes cancer." (USEPA website)

Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) "are produced from burning fuels, including gasoline and coal. Nitrogen Oxides are smog formers, which react with VOCs to form smog. NO_xs are also major components of acid rain." (USEPA website)

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless poisonous gas produced by the incomplete combustion of fuels. Vehicle exhaust is the main source of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere and is found mainly along major roads and intersections.

Particulate Matter are small air pollutant particles in the air including soot, dust, dirt, fly ash and small liquid drops. PM10 includes particles with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less and PM2.5 (fine particles) includes particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter.

Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) is a colorless reactive gas emitted from burning or processing fossil fuels and coal.

TEA-21 Reauthorization: Congress has approved legislation that authorizes a 5-month extension of TEA-21. This extension provides for 5/12 of the expected funding for existing programs for the new fiscal year beginning October 1, 2003. The extension also provides for the necessary time to finalize legislation for the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003, (SAFETEA) which is the reauthorization of TEA-21 for the next 6-year period from 2004-2010.